

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 000339

SIPDIS

NOFORN

DEPT FOR SA/FO AMBASSADOR QUINN, S/CT, SA/A, EUR/RPM,
EUR/UBI, EAP/ANP
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND
CENTCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [NL](#) [AF](#) [AS](#)

SUBJECT: PRT/TARIN KOWT: AUSTRALIANS LOOK KEENLY AT TARIN
KOWT PRT

Classified By: A/DCM ANGUS SIMMONS FOR REASONS

1.4 (B) AND (D)

1. (S/NF) Summary: After Australia,s agreement in principle to send a PRT team to Afghanistan this year, the Australian Force Commander and his POLAD have proposed to Canberra to embed a small number of Australian military personnel in the Tarin Kowt PRT in order to learn more about its operation and function. Embedding Australian military personnel would both improve Australia,s understanding of PRTs as well as augment the current capacity of the PRT. This is particularly important as Australian personnel appear to have two serious misconceptions about PRTs that may be preventing them from whole-heartedly embracing the PRT concept. They have overestimated the personnel requirements for an effective PRT and do not yet see the indirect security that is provided to the PRT by parallel combat missions in the area of operation. Consequently, Australians embedded into the U.S. PRT might play a critical role in persuading the Australians to join in a PRT. However, these on-the-ground efforts should be paralleled by other efforts to fully inform Australian decision-makers in Canberra, thereby dispelling any misconceptions they might hold. End summary.

Status of the Australian Force in Uruzgan

2. (S/NF) The bulk of the Australian commitment to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) is concentrated in Uruzgan Province in the form of a Special Operations Force (SOF) of nearly 200 soldiers. The Australian contingent is rotated every four months with a current overall time commitment of twelve months ending in September 2006. An Australian Base has been established within the overall FOB Ripley perimeter outside of Tarin Kowt (which also encompasses the PRT and an airstrip). From this base, the Australian SOF operates extensively in Uruzgan and southern Dai Kundi, particularly in the Khod Valley of the restive northwestern District of Cahar Cineh. Australian forces will be reinforced in the coming weeks by approximately 100 troops and two heavy lift CH-47 helicopters (Chinooks). The helicopters will operate out of Kandahar Air Field (KAF) and some of the reinforcements will also be stationed in Tarin Kowt.

Growing Interest in the PRT

3. (S/NF) In recent meetings with PRToff and PRT Commander, the Australian Commander in Afghanistan, LTC John Gould, and his POLAD, Sarah Ford, expressed growing certainty that Australia will partner with the Netherlands to take over Tarin Kowt PRT or even take sole ownership. This expectation was reinforced by comments from the POLAD regarding the recent visit of the Australian Chief of Defense Forces, Air Chief Marshall Angus Houston, to Tarin Kowt. These words have been supported by deeds in the last few months, with Australian Forces in Uruzgan taking an interest in more PRT-related tasks: distribution of humanitarian assistance, participation in MED/VET CAPs, and offers to provide assistance to the Afghan Highway Police. POLAD indicated that the Government of Australia would likely take a decision on whether or not to take the PRT in the February or March timeframe after a Dutch decision has been reached.

The Next Step - Australians Embedded at the PRT

4. (S/NF) In the meantime, the Australian Commander would like to take the next step by embedding three to six Australian officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) within the U.S. PRT staff. These Australians

would live and work at the PRT and serve under the command of the U.S. PRT Commander. By being embedded into the staff, the Australians would gain direct knowledge and experience of the operations of a PRT while at the same time augmenting the PRT staff. The Australians do not envision these embedded soldiers to arrive earlier than March or April, thus giving both parties time to fully vet the proposal. However, initial informal discussions between the PRT and the Australians yielded two tentative courses of action:

-- Course of Action One: Three Australian military embedded:

- S2/S3 (intelligence/operations)
- Civil-Military Operations Cell
- Military Police Advisory Team

-- Course of Action Two: Six Australian military embedded:

- Three positions listed above, plus
- Information Operations/Public Affairs
- Base Operations and Engineering
- Civil-Military Operations Cell (agricultural specialist)

Misconceptions Needing Correction

15. (S/NF) Embedding Australian soldiers within the PRT may prove critical to the overall effort at convincing Australia to take over a PRT. Australian officers and officials with whom PRToff has spoken all have two basic misconceptions about the structure and security of PRTs; embedded personnel would likely dispel these misunderstandings. First, despite frequently voicing suspicion of ISAF, the Australians appear to have taken the ISAF approach toward manning a PRT and have seriously overestimated the personnel requirements to function effectively. The Australians envision a 200-soldier complement and believe this number is insufficient to operate a PRT. This is disconcerting considering that U.S. PRTs function with only 80-100 soldiers. Half of the proposed Australian component would be 100 infantrymen for force protection and the other 100 would consist of civil affairs, engineers, and other sectoral specialists. A U.S. PRT by comparison operates with only 50 infantrymen for force protection and at most 20 civil affairs and other specialists, with the remainder devoted to base operations. (Comment: If Australia were to take a PRT with 200 soldiers, they would likely be able to accomplish a great deal. It is not that 200 would be too many, but rather that Australian officials believe it would be too few. End comment.)

16. (S/NF) A second major misconception also influences the Australian concern over troop numbers. Australian officers and their POLAD are reluctant to make the indirect security connection between combat operations performed by their 200 SOF soldiers currently in Uruzgan and the proposed civil-military operations of 200 PRT soldiers. Without a doubt, the combat missions that both U.S. and Australian SOF currently conduct in the outer districts of Uruzgan indirectly provide security for the PRT operating in safer areas. U.S. Special Forces, working out of FOBs in three of the more rugged districts in Uruzgan, conduct frequent patrols and direct action missions that significantly disrupt the enemy's ability to operate in the populated valleys where the PRT is active.

An Absence of Civilians - A Bad Thing?

17. (S/NF) In a third aspect, the Australians again differ in their view of the organization and function of a PRT. They largely do not see an on-the-ground role for their Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID). At most, a Ministry of Defense POLAD might be assigned to a PRT for internal policy work, but no diplomat would be responsible for the crucial external functions of the PRT. Such an absence could leave an Australian PRT or slice of a PRT without the ability to interact with the civilian side of the international effort. (Comment: on the other hand, such an outcome might provide a useful opportunity for the U.S. Government to retain a presence in this critical province. Indeed, the Australian Liaison Officer and POLAD have assumed that the U.S. Political Officer, USAID Field Project Officer, and DynCorps Police Mentors would remain in Tarin Kowt and continue to operate in support of

Coalition and ISAF objectives. Given the usual close U.S.-Australian relations this is unremarkable; however given previous reluctance by the Government of the Netherlands to host U.S. diplomats at their Baghlan PRT such hospitality on the part of the Australians could be useful.)

Comment

18. (S/NF) Embedding Australian military personnel into the PRT temporarily could be an important part of facilitating Australian interest in taking over Tarin Kowt or at least partnering with the Dutch. This could be particularly useful in building Australian confidence in the fact that they have more resources available than they currently believe. We will follow this closely and facilitate as required.
NORLAND